

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COUNCIL DEBATES IRISH QUESTION AND THE RIGHTS OF THE
SICK AND OF THE DYING.

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING DEBATES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE TOOK PLACE ON JANUARY 29 ON THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THE DEBATE CENTERED AROUND A REPORT PREPARED BY THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WHICH GIVES AN EXCELLENT BACKGROUND OF THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND AN ACCOMPANYING RESOLUTION (ADOPTED WITH CERTAIN AMENDMENTS BY THE ASSEMBLY) CALLING FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THE REPORT CONTAINS NOTHING NEW OR STARTLING TO CLOSE OBSERVERS OF THE IRISH SCENE, BUT THE DEBATE, WHICH WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH AND IRISH PARLIAMENTS, WAS OF INTEREST BECAUSE OF THE SOBER AND SERIOUS EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WHICH TOOK PLACE ON THIS COMMON PROBLEM.

THERE WAS AN INTERESTING COINCIDENCE OF VIEWS AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE LEADER OF THE IRISH DELEGATION EDWARD COLLINS AND THE LEADER OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, RAYMOND FLETCHER. BOTH AGREED THERE HAD BEEN GREAT DISCRIMINATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE PAST. BOTH AGREED THAT THE BRITISH ARMY SHOULD REMAIN IN ULSTER UNTIL A SATISFACTORY POLITICAL SOLUTION WHICH WILL GUARANTEE THE RIGHTS OF THE MINORITY IN
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THAT PROVINCE IS REACHED. BOTH AGREED THAT NORTHERN IRELAND CANNOT LEAVE THE UNITED KINGDOM UNLESS THE MAJORITY OF ITS

PEOPLE AGREE TO DO SO. BOTH AGREED THAT TERRORISM WHETHER BY THE IRA OR PROTESTANT GROUPS IS INACCEPTABLE.

THERE WERE, OF COURSE, DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, THE IRISH INSISTING THAT SOME DAY THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY OF ALL PEOPLE IN ALL OF IRELAND FOR A UNION OF ALL THE PARTS OF THE ISLAND MUST PREVAIL, WHILE THE BRITISH ARGUED THAT NO ONE CAN FORCE THE PROTESTANT MAJORITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND UNWILLINGLY INTO A UNION WITH THE IRISH REPUBLIC.

BOTH DELEGATIONS IN REMARKS TO ME AFTER THE DEBATE RECOGNIZED THAT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE IS TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHTS OF MEN, PROVIDES A UNIQUE FORUM FOR AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND FOR DISCUSSION OF STEPS LEADING TO AN EVENTUAL SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. NO ONE HOWEVER, FELT THAT ANY REAL PROGRESS ON THE SITUATION IS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT THE ASSEMBLY ADOPTED A RECOMMENDATION AND A RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE SICK AND OF THE DYING. THE DEBATE RAISED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTEREST BECAUSE OF THE PUBLIC STAND TAKEN BY THE CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF STRASBOURG AGAINST CERTAIN PARTS OF THE RECOMMENDATION AND OF THE RESOLUTION DEALING WITH THE QUESTION OF EUTHANASIA AND RAISING QUESTIONS AS TO THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIALLY PROLONGING THE LIFE OF TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.

THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION WERE ADOPTED AFTER A LONG DEBATE AND NUMEROUS AMENDMENTS.ROMINE

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